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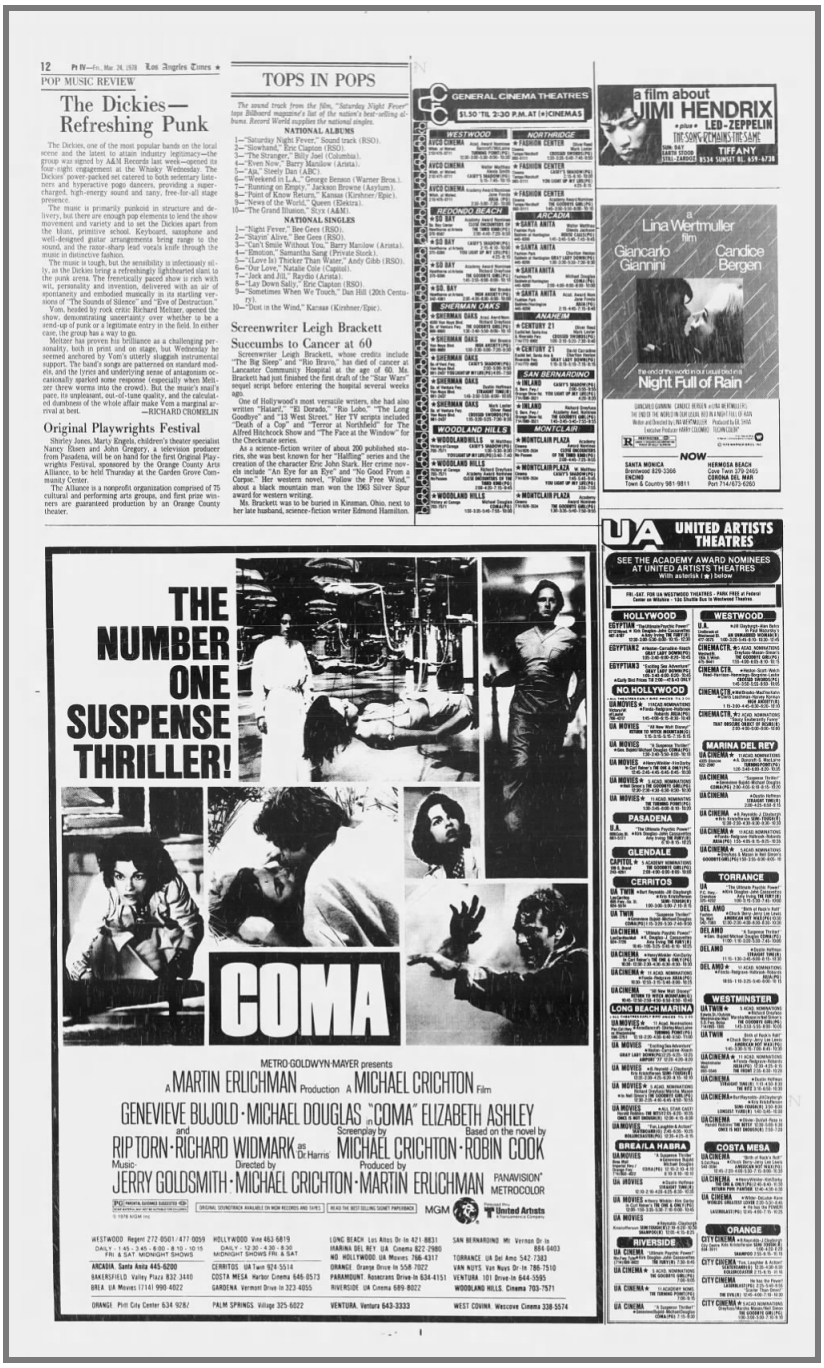

12 Pt IV—Fri., Mar. 24, 1978 Los Angeles Times

POP MUSIC REVIEW

The Dickies—Refreshing Punk

The Dickies, one of the most popular bands on the local scene and the latest to attain industry legitimacy—the group was signed by A&M Records last week—opened its four-night engagement at the Whisky Wednesday. The Dickies' power-packed set catered to both sedentary listeners and hyperactive pogo dancers, providing a supercharged, high-energy sound and zany, free-for-all stage presence.

The music is primarily punkoid in structure and delivery, but there are enough pop elements to lend the show movement and variety and to set the Dickies apart from the blunt, primitive school. Keyboard, saxophone and well-designed guitar arrangements bring range to the sound, and the razor-sharp lead vocals knife through the music in distinctive fashion.

The music is tough, but the sensibility is infectiously silly, as the Dickies bring a refreshingly lighthearted slant to the punk arena. The frenetically paced show is rich with wit, personality and invention, delivered with an air of spontaneity and embodied musically in its startling versions of "The Sounds of Silence" and "Eve of Destruction."

Vom, headed by rock critic Richard Meltzer, opened the show, demonstrating uncertainty over whether to be a send-up of punk or a legitimate entry in the field. In either case, the group has a way to go.

Meltzer has proven his brilliance as a challenging personality, both in print and on stage, but Wednesday he seemed anchored by Vom's utterly sluggish instrumental support. The band's songs are patterned on standard models, and the lyrics and underlying sense of antagonism occasionally sparked some response (especially when Meltzer threw worms into the crowd). But the music's main pare, its unpleasant, out-of-tune quality, and the calculated dumbness of the whole affair make Vom a marginal arrival at best.

—RICHARD CROMELIN

Original Playwrights Festival

Shirley Jones, Marty Ingels, children's theater specialist Nancy Elsen and John Gregory, a television producer from Pasadena, will be on hand for the first Original Playwrights Festival, sponsored by the Orange County Arts Alliance, to be held Thursday at the Garden Grove Community Center.

The Alliance is a nonprofit organization comprised of 75 cultural and performing arts groups, and first prize winners are guaranteed production by an Orange County theater.

TOPS IN POPS

The second track from the film, "Saturday Night Fever" tops Billboard magazine's list of the nation's best-selling albums. Record World supplies the national singles.

NATIONAL ALBUMS

1—"Saturday Night Fever," Sound track (RSO).
2—"Slowhand," Eric Clapton (RSO).
3—"The Stranger," Billy Joel (Columbia).
4—"Even Now," Barry Manilow (Arista).
5—"Air," Steely Dan (ABC).
6—"Weekend in L.A.," George Benson (Warner Bros.).
7—"Running on Empty," Jackson Browne (Asylum).
8—"Point of Know Return," Kansas (Kirshner/Epic).
9—"News of the World," Queen (Elektra).
10—"The Grand Illusion," Styx (A&M).

NATIONAL SINGLES

1—"Night Fever," Bee Gees (RSO).
2—"Stayin' Alive," Bee Gees (RSO).
3—"Can't Smile Without You," Barry Manilow (Arista).
4—"Emotion," Samantha Sang (Private Stock).
5—"(Love Is) Thicker Than Water," Andy Gibb (RSO).
6—"Our Love," Natalie Cole (Capitol).
7—"Jack and Jill," Raydio (Arista).
8—"Lay Down Sally," Eric Clapton (RSO).
9—"Sometimes When We Touch," Dan Hill (20th Century).
10—"Dust in the Wind," Kansas (Kirshner/Epic).

Screenwriter Leigh Brackett Succumbs to Cancer at 60

Screenwriter Leigh Brackett, whose credits include "The Big Sleep" and "Rio Bravo," has died of cancer at Lancaster Community Hospital at the age of 60. Ms. Brackett had just finished the first draft of the "Star Wars" sequel script before entering the hospital several weeks ago.

One of Hollywood's most versatile writers, she had also written "Hatari!," "El Dorado," "Rio Lobo," "The Long Goodbye" and "13 West Street." Her TV scripts included "Death of a Cop" and "Terror at Northfield" for The Alfred Hitchcock Show and "The Face at the Window" for the Checkmate series.

As a science-fiction writer of about 200 published stories, she was best known for her "Hatfling" series and the creation of the character Eric John Stark. Her crime novels include "An Eye for an Eye" and "No Good From a Corpse." Her western novel, "Follow the Free Wind," about a black mountain man won the 1963 Silver Spur award for western writing.

Ms. Brackett was to be buried in Kinsman, Ohio, next to her late husband, science-fiction writer Edmond Hamilton.

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